

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 Lening 00037 01 OF 02 110630Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SAJ-01 /074 W
-----110640Z 000739 /12
R 110545Z JAN 77
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2893
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 LENINGRAD 0037

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, SCUL, CSCE, UR, US
SUBJ: FURTHER VIEWS ON CONDITION OF SOVIET BAPTISTS

REF: MOSCOW 2075

1. SUMMARY. RECENT CALL ON BAPTIST MINISTER PROVIDED ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO STATE OF LENINGRAD AND SOVIET BAPTIST COMMUNITY, WHILE SUBSTANTIATING VIEWS REPORTED EARLIER BY EMBASSY. LENINGRAD BAPTIST COMMUNITY STABLE BUT CONTINUES OPERATE WITHIN TIGHTLY RESTRICTIVE SOVIET FRAMEWORK WHICH EXCLUDES POSSIBILITY OF RAPID GROWTH IN NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGENOFF ACCOMPANIED BY EUR/SOV REPRESENTATIVE, HENDERSON, CALLED ON BAPTIST MINISTER SERGEI NIKOLAEV JANUARY 7 TO DISCUSS GENERAL SITUATION OF LENINGRAD BAPTISTS. NIKOLAEV IS YOUNG ASSISTANT PASTOR OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN BAPTIST CHURCH LOCATED IN LENINGRAD'S POKLONAYA GORA DISTRICT. HE STUDIED NEARLY 2 1/2 YEARS IN LONDON IN PERIOD 1973-75 AND SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH. IN BROAD RANGING DISCUSSION MANY OF THE SAME GENERAL SUBJECTS COVERED IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 Lening 00037 01 OF 02 110630Z

EMBOFF'S MEETING WITH BAPTIST GENERAL SECRETARY BYCHKOV AND REV. ZHIDKOV WERE TOUCHED ON AND NIKOLAEV'S RESPONSES WERE IN SUBSTANTIVE AGREEMENT WITH THOSE REPORTED REFTEL. NIKOLAEV DID, HOWEVER, OFFER NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC INSIGHTS ON LENINGRAD AND SOVIET BAPTIST COMMUNITY WHICH ARE REPORTED BELOW.

3. NIKOLAEV NOTED THAT LENINGRAD BAPTIST COMMUNITY NUMBERS APPROXIMATELY 3,500. OF THESE ABOUT 3,200 ARE ON ROLLS OF OFFICIAL BAPTIST CHURCH WITH REMAINING 300 OR SO MADE UP OF DISSIDENT "INITSIATIVNIKI." IN ADDITION, THERE ARE ALWAYS NUMBER OF "DROP"INS" VARYING IN NUMBER AT EACH SERVICE, SOME OF WHOM ATTEND WITH REGULARITY BUT APPARENTLY HAVE NOT YET MADE DECISION TO FORMALLY JOIN CHURCH. NIKOLAEV STATED THAT THERE ARE SIX BAPTIST CHURCHES WITH SEPARATE CONGREGATIONS IN LENINGRAD AREA. NUMBER OF SERVICES HELD BY EACH CHURCH MUST BE AGREED UPON BY THE GOVERNMENT. HIS CHURCH CURRENTLY HOLDS SIX SERVICES A WEEK (TUESDAY, THURSDAY, SATURDAY, AND THREE ON SUNDAY) BUT THE CHURCH IS OVERCROWDED AND PASTOR HAS REQUESTED SEVENTH SERVICE WHICH HE BELIEVES HE IS LIKELY TO OBTAIN. LENINGRAD BAPTIST COMMUNITY REPORTEDLY HAS REMAINED ROUGHLY STABLE IN RECENT YEARS, ALTHOUGH IN 1950S IN AFTER-SHOCK OF WAR, NUMBER WAS AROUND 4,000. BULK OF CONGREGATION IS MADE UP OF OLD PEOPLE BUT NIKOLAEV EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT NOW AROUND 18 PERCENT OF MEMBERSHIP IS COMPOSED OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF AGES BETWEEN 14 AND 30.

4. NIKOLAEV'S REMARKS ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFFICIAL BAPTIST CHURCH AND NON-OFFICIAL "INITSIATIVNIKI" SUBSTANTIATED COMMENTS PARA 6-7 REFTEL. HE STRESSED READINESS OF OFFICIAL CHURCH TO CARRY ON OPEN RELATIONSHIP WITH DISSIDENTS AND MAINTAIN BOTH ORGANIZATIONAL AND PERSONAL CONTACTS. HE ADDED THAT LENINGRAD DISSIDENTS SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN "AUTHORITY" PRINCIPLE AND ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY MORE STRUCTURED RELATIONSHIP OVER THEIR SYSTEM OF MEETING IN VARIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LENDING 00037 01 OF 02 110630Z

MEMBERS' HOMES. NIKOLAEV CLAIMED THAT HE KNOWS OF NO BAPTIST "PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE" IN LENINGRAD AREA AT THIS TIME. LIKE BYCHKOV AND ZHIDKOV HE WAS NOT ENTIRELY SYMPATHETIC WITH CASE OF GEORGIY VINS, NOTING THAT WHILE BAPTISTS NOT TURNING BACKS ON VINS, HE HAD BEEN "WARNED FOR YEARS" BY AUTHORITIES THAT HIS ACTIONS CONTRARY TO SOVIET LAW.

5. NIKOLAEV SAID THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH ORTHODOX COMMUNITY HERE GOOD AND THAT RECIPROCAL SERVICES HAD BEEN HELD IN EACH OTHER'S CHURCHES. THERE ARE SOME REMAINING DIFFERENCES OF OPINION IN BAPTIST COMMUNITY ABOUT CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS "WESTERN STYLE" ON DECEMBER 25TH OR "EASTERN STYLE" ON JANUARY 7. HIS CHURCH OPTED FOR "WESTERN STYLE" BUT WAS CELEBRATING SECOND CHRISTMAS AS WELL.

6. ACCORDING NIKOLAEV, BAPTISTS HAVE NO SEMINARY AND BECAUSE OF DOCTRINAL PROBLEMS DO NOT SEND MINISTERS TO ORTHODOX SEMINARY IN CITY. ALL-UNION COUNCIL HOWEVER, HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED TO SPONSOR 50 PERSONS PER YEAR IN NEXT

THREE YEARS FOR CORRESPONDENCE COURSES TO TRAIN MINISTERS.
NIKOLAEV SEEMED HOLD OUT SOME HOPE THAT BAPTISTS MIGHT RECEIVE
STATE PERMISSION TO SET UP THEIR OWN
SEMINARY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEM
WHICH WOULD FOLLOW SUCH DECISION BUT SAID KEY
ELEMENT WAS GOVERNMENT PERMISSION AFTER WHICH ALL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 Lening 00037 02 OF 02 110640Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SAJ-01 /074 W
-----110642Z 000837 /21

R 110545Z JAN 77
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2894
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 LENINGRAD 0037

ELSE WHOULD FALL IN PLACE IN RELATIVELY SHORT ORDER.
CONCERNING POSSIBILITY EVANGELIZING, HE STRESSED THAT
WHILE RELIGIOUS PERSONAL LIFE POSSIBLE IN SOVIET UNION,
EVANGELIZING ILLEGAL. SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR
CHILDREN FORBIDDEN BY LAW ALTHOUGH PARENTS COULD
TEACH CHILDREN INDIVIDUALLY AT HOME. PREACHING AT
WORK PLACES OR ANYWHERE OUTSIDE AUTHORIZED CHURCH
SERVICES ALSO ILLEGAL AND EVANGELIZING THEREFORE
MUST BE BY FORCE OF ONE'S PERSONAL EXAMPLE SINCE
MOST PEOPLE "KNOW WHO CHRISTIANS AMONG THEM ARE"
ANYWAY.

7. NIKOLAEV HAS STATED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
AUTHORITIES AND CHURCH IN LENINGRAD "CORRECT" AND
"BECOMING EASIER." HE ADDED THAT OLD STRONGLY
FELT PRE-AND EARLY POST-REVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDE
THAT CHURCH IS NATURAL ENEMY HAS BEEN SOFTENED
SOMEWHAT BY TIME. HE ALSO SUBSTANTIATED REPORTS
THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME RESURGENCE OF RELIGION IN
GENERAL IN SOVIET UNION ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUTH
CONCERNED WITH SPIRITUAL ARIDITY OF SYSTEM AND ATTRACTED
BY BEAUTY AND CULTURAL RICHNESS OF CHURCH TRADITIONS.

RE MATERIAL SUPPORT, NIKOLAEV COMMENTED, THAT OTHER
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LENDING 00037 02 OF 02 110640Z

THAN BUILDING ITSELF, CHURCH RECEIVES NO FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FROM STATE AND MUST PAY TAXES ON LAND UPON
WHICH CHURCH SITS. THIS AND OTHER COSTS BORNE
ENTIRELY BY CONGREGATION.

8. COMMENT: IT WAS APPARENT THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW,
WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT IN CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE, THAT
NIKOLAEV WAS WALKING FINE LINE AIMED AT AVOIDING
EXPLICIT CRITICISM (OR SUPPORT) OF SOVIET OFFICIAL
CHURCH POLICIES. PICTURE WHICH EMERGED WAS ONE OF
CHURCH WHICH CURRENTLY MAINTAINING ITSELF WHILE
DRAWING HOPE FOR FUTURE FROM GRADUALLY INCREASING
NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ITS MEMBERSHIP AND
CURRENT SLIGHTLY IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE ON
PART TRADITIONALLY REPRESSIVE SOVIET AUTHORITIES.
NEUBERT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, POLITICAL REPRESSION, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LENING00037
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770009-1095
Format: TEL
From: LENINGRAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770163/aaaacdln.tel
Line Count: 193
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c51a2fdb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MOSCOW 2075
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3626840
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER VIEWS ON CONDITION OF SOVIET BAPTISTS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, SCUL, UR, US, CSCE, (NIKOLAEV, SERGEI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbcc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c51a2fdb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009